

## THE BLENDED ALTERNATIVE AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Theme**

The emphasis is to provide a range of recreation opportunities in balance with biological diversity considerations. The range of recreation that is provided will be determined by projected demand and analysis of trends. The quantity of recreation that is available will be determined by measures of recreation capacity. Ecological constraints may limit recreation activities in some locations of the Forest.

Emphasize vegetative management in all habitat types using such tools as timber harvest, prescribed fire, and mechanical equipment to produce healthy, diverse ecosystems and improve wildlife habitat. This alternative includes human use as an important element of ecosystem management.

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### **Relationship to the Revision Topics**

**Biological Diversity** - Management will focus on maintaining the population of all species well above the minimum viability level. Habitat management will be aggressive with many projects focusing on threatened, endangered, and sensitive (TES) species, sport fish, and big and small game. Watershed conditions will improve. Significant positive changes in vegetation composition and structure will occur.

**Travel Management** - Provide a balance of trail opportunities for motorized, for non-motorized, and for mechanized opportunities consistent with wildlife and watershed considerations. Some roads and trails will close to resolve resource conflicts. Winter motorized travel opportunities will decrease slightly primarily at lower elevations where travel will be restricted to designated routes. Provide loop road and trail opportunities for both motorized and non-motorized users. Summer off-road and trail motorized travel is not allowed except to access hunter camps within 100 feet of existing roads and for range permit holders to salt and maintain improvements. User conflicts are resolved through a partnership between user groups and the Forest Service. Keep roads

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needed for resource management, administrative access, public access to destinations, and public access to allow driving for pleasure. Utilize volunteer groups and organizations to accomplish road and trail maintenance.

**Recreation** - Distribution of summer and winter recreation opportunities responds to current visitor demands and projected trends. Ski based resort land allocations are reduced from the present plan but do provide for consideration of some potential expansion to provide improved quality and safety of the skiing experience. Semi-primitive recreation opportunities are balanced between non-motorized and motorized users. Mountain bike opportunities are identified and provided. Based on widespread feedback, opportunities for additional back country huts are few, if any. Existing developed recreation sites such as campgrounds are expanded or improved and new facilities are constructed on environmentally acceptable sites in response to visitor demand or to concentrate visitor use. Visual landscapes are managed to a moderate scenic integrity level.

**Roadless Areas** - Eight areas are recommended for wilderness designation.

**Special Areas** - A few special interest areas are established with a balance between education, interpretation, and botanical sites. Designate the two most important special interest areas proposed for interpretation. Three limited use special interest areas are designated. Use existing authorities to manage and protect the other areas.

**Research Natural Areas** - Recommend two of the proposed areas within each Ecological Section with larger numbers of plant associations. Revise recommended RNA boundaries to remove active allotments and vacant allotments proposed for retention.

**Timber Harvest** - A moderate level of allowable sale quantity (ASQ) is provided. Less than 5% of the Forest has been harvested in the last century. The Blended Alternative reduces the program harvests by about half and has less average annual harvests than the current plan. Timber harvest is used as a tool to provide for forest health and improve wildlife habitat. The portion of timber harvest that does not contribute to the ASQ is small. Some new roads, either temporary or permanent, will be built. In order to accomplish necessary vegetative management, a viable timber harvest program is needed.

**Other**

**Wilderness** - Manage wilderness portal areas as primitive wilderness. Manage remote wilderness without National Forest system trails and with a high opportunity for solitude as pristine wilderness.

Eight new wilderness parcels adjacent to existing wilderness areas are proposed by this alternative. All of these eight areas are in addition to the 754,000 acres of existing wilderness in the White River National Forest. During the two previous wilderness reviews, a good job was done in identifying and designating the best wilderness candidate lands. Most of the remaining identified roadless areas possess lower wilderness characteristics.

**Water** - The White River National Forest is the source of six rivers which flow into the Colorado River and beyond. Downstream users are dependent on this National Forest for an adequate quantity and quality of water for their use. Best management practices are an important element of this alternative. We propose working with and through Colorado's well-established instream flow program for needed flows for the Federal Government. State instream flows for fisheries adequately serves National Forest purposes. Federal taking of state water is emphatically opposed by water users, adjudicators, and the State.

**Range** - Continue existing allotments. Retain vacant cattle allotments if they have potential for future use and to provide future flexibility. Retain some vacant sheep allotments at locations without the presence of bighorn sheep and with minimum other conflicts.

**Intermix** - Where public lands are isolated or intermixed with private lands threatened by development, include them in this prescription and use a multi-jurisdictional collaborative process to determine their future management.

**Forest Health** - Actively manage the White River National Forest to maintain acceptable ranges of insect and disease activity and reduce the risk of high intensity wildfire events. Manage forest stand structure and composition to increase biodiversity and mimic the historic range of variability.